

## Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 PORT O 00378 181607Z

44

ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 ARAE-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 USIE-00 INRE-00

CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-01 INR-07 L-02 NSAE-00 NSC-05

PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 COME-00 EB-07 LAB-04 SIL-01

OPR-01 FEAE-00 INT-05 SY-04 IO-10 /080 W

----- 081292

O R 181528Z FEB 75

FM AMEMBASSY PORT OF SPAIN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 7406

INFO AMEMBASSY BRIDGETOWN

AMEMBASSY GEORGETOWN

C O N F I D E N T I A L PORT OF SPAIN 0378

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: ELAB PINS ENRG TD OVIP (WILLIAMS, ERIC)

SUBJECT: LABOR TENSIONS DEFER SOME CABINET TRAVEL

REF: POS 0375

1. FOLLOWING IS STATUS REPORT AS CRITICAL DAY OF NEGOTIATIONS  
OPENS BETWEEN THE OILFIELD WORKERS TRADE UNION (OWTU) AND TEXACO  
FOR NEW THREE-YEAR LABOR CONTRACT TO REPLACE PREVIOUS CONTRACT  
WHICH FORMALLY EXPIRED YESTERDAY (FEB 17).

2. DEPUTY PRIMIN AND MINISTER OF INDUSTRY AND COMMERCE ERROL  
MAHABIR DEFERRED HIS PLANNED TRAVEL TO THE USA SUNDAY TO JOIN  
PRIME MINISTER WILLIAMS' PARTY AND HAS REMAINED HERE IN TRINIDAD AT  
BEHEST OF OTHER SENIOR MEMBERS OF GOVERNMENT. WE UNDERSTAND HE  
STILL HOPES TO DEPART FOR USA TOMORROW (FEB 19) IF EVERYTHING GOES  
REASONABLY WELL TODAY. IDC GENERAL MANAGER ELDON WARNER AND MORE  
JUNIOR OFFICIALS PROCEEDED SUNDAY TO JOIN PRIMIN WILLIAMS AS PLANNED.

3. CABINET MET IN EMERGENCY SESSION ON MONDAY TO DISCUSS TROUBLED  
LABOR SCENE.

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PAGE 02 PORT O 00378 181607Z

4. PRESS TODAY REPORTS THAT SIGNIFICANT POLICE REINFORCEMENTS

HAVE BEEN MOVED SOUTH TO THE OIL AND SUGAR BELTS UNDER COMMAND OF DEPUTY POLICE COMMISSIONER DENNIS RAMDWAR. THE DECISION FOLLOWED A PLEA BY MEMBERS OF ONE FACTION OF CANE FARMERS FOR POLICE PROTECTION AND SEVERAL INCIDENTS OF VIOLENCE AGAINST TEXACO PERSONNEL, INCLUDING THE BEATING OF THE COMPANY'S LABOR OFFICER AND THE FIRE-BOMBING OF THE HOMES OF THREE COMPANY OFFICIALS WITHIN LAST FEW DAYS. FIRE BOMBING RESULTED NEITHER IN CASUALTIES NOR SERIOUS DAMAGE.

5. THE OWTU, RAFFIQUE SHAH'S CANE FARMERS' UNION (ICFTU) AND THE "ALL TRINIDAD" SUGAR ESTATE WORKERS UNION LED BY BASDEO PANDAY HAVE JOINTLY CALLED FOR AN ALL-DAY MASS MEETING OF THEIR MEMBERS AT SAN FERNANDO TODAY UNDER BANNER OF THE "UNITED LABOR FRONT."

6. A SIGNIFICANT BOOST WAS GIVEN TO RAFFIQUE SHAH'S EFFORTS TO GAIN RECOGNITION FOR THE ICFTU ON FEB 14 WHEN A HIGH COURT JUDGE DECLARED UNCONSTITUTIONAL THE PARTS OF THE CANE-FARMERS INCORPORATION AND CESS ACT UNDER WHICH THE TRINIDAD ISLANDWIDE CANE FARMERS ASSOCIATION (TICFA) WAS MADE THE EXCLUSIVE BARGAINING AGENT FOR CANE FARMERS AND WHICH MADE MEMBERSHIP IN AND PAYMENT OF FEES TO (TICFA) COMPULSORY. ALTHOUGH BEING CHALLENGED, THE COURT RULING HAS GIVEN SHAH'S EFFORTS THE NEW LOOK OF SUCCESS AND WILL CERTAINLY ADD TO THE SENSE OF MILITANCY AND SOLIDARITY THE OIL AND CANE LABOR LEADERS ARE TRYING TO FORGE.

7. A SCHOOL IN POINTE-A-PIERRE HAS CLOSED FOR 18 FEBRUARY AS A PRECAUTIONARY STEP, IN VIEW OF THE CALLS FOR MASS MEETINGS AND POSSIBILITIES OF CLASHES WITH POLICE.

8. THE CRITICAL LABOR NEGOTIATIONS THEMSELVES WILL TAKE PLACE HERE IN PORT OF SPAIN WITH LABOR MINISTRY MEDIATION.

9. COMMENT: WE ESTIMATE AT LEAST A FIFTY PERCENT CHANCE OF AVOIDING AN ALL-OUT LABOR CONFRONTATION. WEEKES MUST WONDER JUST HOW FAR HIS RELATIVELY CONSERVATIVE RANK AND FILE WILL FOLLOW HIM IF TEXACO MAKES A REASONABLY PALATABLE WAGE OFFER. THE BIGGEST IMMEDIATE DANGER IS PROBABLY SOME INADVERTENT INCIDENT OF VIOLENCE BETWEEN POLICE AND UNION RALLIERS WHICH COULD GET OUT OF HAND. BEYOND THAT, THERE IS THE POSSIBILITY OF MAJOR STRIKES WHICH COULD VIRTUALLY SHUT DOWN THE COUNTRY AND THE DIFFICULT

CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 03 PORT O 00378 181607Z

QUESTION THEN POSED FOR GOVERNMENT AS TO WHAT TO DO ABOUT IT. IF SUCH STRIKES DO OCCUR, PRIME MINISTER WILLIAMS WOULD PROBABLY RETURN IMMEDIATELY TO GUIDE GOVERNMENT DECISIONS. PERHAPS MOST LIKELY IS FOR THE SITUATION TO CONTINUE TO ROCK ALONG WITHOUT A CLEAR OUTCOME FOR SOME DAYS YET.  
RICH

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## Message Attributes

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